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evident at the close of the battle, at 6 p.m., when the returned tide prevented the escape of the Danes from the Clontarf shore to the north bank of the Liffey.

Sir W. R. Hamilton and the Rev. Dr. Todd made some remarks on the foregoing paper.

MONDAY, MAY 27, 1861.

The VERY REV. CHARLES GRAVES, D. D., President, in the Chair.

A LETTER was read from Major-General Sir Thomas R. Larcom, relative to the Treasury Minute concerning Treasure Trove in Ireland. Whereupon

IT WAS RESOLVED,—That the respectful thanks of the Royal Irish Academy are due, and are hereby presented, to the Lords of her Majesty's Treasury for the liberal manner in which they have provided for the preservation of articles of Treasure Trove, and for the favour they have done the Academy in making it the depository of such objects.

IT WAS ALSO RESOLVED,—That the Royal Irish Academy, in acknowledgment of his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant's gracious interference on its behalf, in reference to the articles of Treasure Trove in Ireland, is bound, and takes the present early opportunity to tender its grateful acknowledgments of the same; and begs to assure his Excellency that it will deem it a privilege to render its best assistance and co-operation in furthering a measure so likely to conduce to the advancement of antiquarian studies and the extension of the National Museum.

IT WAS ALSO RESOLVED,—That the President be requested to communicate to Major-General Sir Thomas A. Larcom the Academy's sense of the value of his services in regard to the arrangements lately made concerning Treasure Trove in Ireland, which are so likely to conduce to the furtherance of antiquarian studies, and the advantage of an Institution in whose welfare he has always taken such a lively interest.

The REV. DR. TODD, V. P., read the following paper:—

SOME REMARKS ON THE HISTORY OF THE BATTLE OF CLONTARF, IN CONNEXION WITH MR. HAUGHTON'S DETERMINATION OF THE TIME OF HIGH WATER IN DUBLIN BAY ON GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 23, 1014.

HAVING met with a statement in an ancient authority, to which Mr. Haughton has already called the attention of the Academy, that on the day of the battle of Clontarf, the time of high water coincided with the hour of sunrise in Dublin Bay, it occurred to me that this circumstance afforded a means of testing the accuracy of the narrative. I knew that Mr. Haughton had undertaken, and in part executed, the arduous task of reducing the tidal observations collected some years ago under the auspices of the Academy, and that he had also, for a reason which he will himself have an opportunity of explaining to you this evening, paid

particular attention to the tides of Dublin Bay. I therefore proposed to him to investigate the question—at what hour of the day the tide was full on the shore of Clontarf on Good Friday, * April 23, 1014; but, at his own request, I did not tell him what the hour, as stated in the MS. was, but simply that I wished to test the accuracy of the narrative of the battle of Clontarf contained in the ancient tract called “The Wars of the Gaedhil with the Gaill,” i. e., of the Irish with the Danes and other Norsemen, which I am engaged in editing, as one of the series of Chronicles in course of publication under the direction of the English Master of the Rolls.

The result of a very laborious calculation, communicated to the Academy by Mr. Haughton, at its last meeting, was highly satisfactory. It completely confirmed the statement of the MS., showing that the morning tide was full on the shore of Clontarf at sunrise, when the battle began, at half-past five, A. M.; and that the evening tide, which so materially aided in the defeat of the Danes, took place at 5.55, P. M.

The narrative states that, at the hour of the evening tide, the foreigners, retreating in disorder to the shore, found their ships carried out to sea beyond their reach, and were suddenly overwhelmed by the rising tide. The victorious forces, under the command of Brian, pressed upon them vigorously, taking possession of the wood of Clontarf, on the N. E., and of “the head of Dubhgal’s Bridge,” on the west; “the foreigners, therefore,” to use the words of the narrative, “could only fly to the sea, and were there drowned in great numbers; and they lay in heaps and in hundreds, confounded, after parting with their bodily senses and understanding, under the powerful and tremendous pressure” with which they were pursued by the Irish.†

Mr. Gilbert, in his History of Dublin,‡ has shown that Dubhgal’s Bridge,§ was “the Old Bridge” leading from Bridgefoot-street to Oxmantown, the Norse quarter of Dublin; and this continued to be the only bridge over the Liffey, from about the year 1000 until a second was erected, in 1670. See Mr. Haliday’s valuable paper on the ancient name of Dublin, in vol. xxii. of the Transactions of the Academy.

It appears, therefore, that, at least towards the close of the day, the battle extended from the wood of Clontarf to the Old Bridge, then called Dubhgal’s Bridge, and consequently may have been quite visible

* Dr. Dasent, “Story of Burnt Njal,” *Introd.*, vol. i., p. cxcv., tells us that, in 1014, Good Friday fell on the 18th April; but the 18th April, 1014, was Palm Sunday, the Dominical letter being C.

† “Danish Wars,” ch. cvii., pp. 191, *sq.*

‡ Vol. i., ch. ix., p. 319, *sq.*

§ We know nothing of the Dubhgal, who seems to have given his name to this bridge. The word signifies “black foreigner,” and was the appellation usually given by the Irish to the Danes, in contradistinction to the Fingall, “white foreigners,” or Norwegians. The name is still preserved amongst us in the form of Dougall, Mac Dougall, and Doyle. From the proximity of the Oxmantown, or Ostman-town, the bridge may have been called Dubhgal, or Dane’s Bridge; but the word is in the singular number, as if Dubhgal was the proper name of a man: *ḍubocait Ḍubḡail*, “Dougall’s bridge,” not *ḍuocait na nḌubḡail*, or “The bridge of the Danes.”—Gilbert, *ibid.*

from the walls of the city. There, on the battlements, as the ancient narrative more than once tells us, stood the Danish women and the garrison, left for the defence of the city under Sitric, the Danish king, and watched from the towers of Dublin the progress of the fight.

Another minute particular, recorded in the narrative, and probably derived from the testimony of eye-witnesses, is, that a strong north-easterly wind prevailed during the day, as it still very commonly does during the month of April, in Dublin, and drove into the eyes of the spectators the dust, fragments of hair and clothes, and sparks of fire occasioned by the conflict.

Both the Irish and Icelandic authorities have agreed to give to this battle the name of "the battle of Brian," from the Sovereign of Ireland, who led the Irish forces on the occasion, and who is generally known by the *soubriquet* of Brian Borumha. This name is derived, as some have thought, from Beal-Borumha, a fort on the Shannon, not far from Kincora, the ancient royal residence of the Kings of Munster; but others, with more probability, suppose the title to be derived from the Boroinhe or cow-tribute exacted by Brian from the chieftains of Leinster as the pledge of their submission, when he assumed the sovereignty of Ireland.

Brian had been a warrior from his youth up, and had often been reduced to great extremity in his predatory expeditions against the Munster Danes and the tribes of Connaught. When his elder brother, Mathgamhain, or Mahon, was treacherously murdered, having been betrayed by Donovan, Lord of Hy Figeinte, into the hands of Molloy, King of Desmond, and Ivar, King of the Danes of Limerick, Brian became King of Thomond, or North Munster, and took ample vengeance for his brother's slaughter. Molloy and Donovan were both slain, Limerick was sacked, and its Danish occupants overthrown with great slaughter. This was in the year 978. Soon afterwards Brian became King of all Munster, or of Leth Mogha, as the southern half of Ireland was called.

About this time Maelsechlainn, or Malachy, King of Meath, defeated the Danes of Dublin with great slaughter, in the battle of Tara, A. D. 979, and immediately after succeeded to the throne of Ireland in succession to Domhnall, son of Muirchertach MacNeill, who had just died. Malachy was of the race of Hy Neill, a family from which the Kings of Ireland had been chosen without a single exception, for upwards of five centuries. He was of the southern branch of that family, and it had grown into a custom, from which only one deviation had occurred in nearly three hundred years preceding Malachy's accession, that the Sovereign should be chosen alternately from the northern and southern O'Neills. His hereditary right to the throne was therefore indisputable, as his predecessor had been of the northern branch of the family; and therefore Tighernach, one of our most independent annalists, does not hesitate to give the name of rebellion to the revolution which dethroned him, and placed Brian in his seat.

This revolution, the result of might, not of right, was mainly due to the jealousy of his northern and more powerful kinsmen. Although they

had no love for Brian, and although Malachy had succeeded to the throne according to the hereditary right and usage, nevertheless they refused him all assistance; and Malachy, rather than see his people slaughtered in a hopeless contest, submitted at length to the superior force of Brian. The result was, that the O'Neills lost altogether the sovereignty, which might have been retained in the family, had Aodh or Hugh O'Neill consented, by uniting against Munster, to support the rights of his kinsman. As it turned out, Malachy was the last legitimate king of the race from which the sovereigns of Ireland had been chosen ever since the age of St. Patrick.

There is scarcely one of our native kings so well known by name to the English public as this Malachy; every school-girl in the United Kingdom who can sing an Irish melody has heard of the times "when Malachy wore the collar of gold which he won from the proud invader." But there is scarcely one of our native kings whose actions are so little known, or whose character has been so much maligned, even by our native historians, as this same Malachy.

He is accused of treachery, of having violated all his engagements and treaties with Brian; and it is even said that Brian was called upon to dethrone him, and to take upon himself the supreme authority by the earnest solicitations of the princes and estates of Connaught.* Nay, we are told that at the battle of Clontarf Malachy had made a private treaty with the enemy, and at the commencement of the action actually deserted, with his whole army, and remained inactive during the remainder of the battle.†

This latter calumny, although it has been countenanced by Keating, on the authority of the "Danish Wars," is destitute of all probability. It has proceeded altogether from the partizans of Brian; and it is curious to observe that Bishop O'Brien, one of the latest of those partizans, after the lapse of almost eight centuries, still retaining the spirit of clan-ship to the founder of his name, repeats all the stories of Malachy's bad faith with much greater acrimony and much more minute detail than any of those who had lived nearer to the scene of action.

The insinuation that Malachy was naturally inclined to ally himself with the Danes because Gluniarn, or "Iron Knee," King of the Danes of Dublin, was his half-brother, is particularly unfair.‡ It is quite true that Gluniarn was Malachy's half-brother; but alliances matrimonial and political between the Irish and Danish families were at that time very common, and Brian himself was as closely connected with the Danish royal family of Dublin as Malachy was.

Olaf, or Amhlaoibh, as his name is written by the Irish authorities, is called Olaf Quaran, in the Njal Saga (Olaf Kuaran§ in other Sagas),

* See Dr. O'Brien's "Law of Tanistry illustrated," in Vallancey's *Collectanea*, Part IV., p. 520.

† Ibid., pp. 525-6, 529.

‡ Ibid., p. 516.

§ Landnámabók, Part I., k. 19 (*Islendinga Sögur*, vol. i., p. 49. Copenhagen. 1829). *Saga Olaf's Tryggvasonar* (*Formanna Sögur*, tom. x., p. 255. Copenhagen. 1835).

a title which seems not to be understood by the northern antiquarians. In Irish history he is called Amlaff *Cuarain*, or Olaff of the Sandle; for *Cuaran* (as Mr. Curry informs me) is a word still used in Ireland to denote a shoe fastened by a thong, which leaves the upper part of the foot bare. Dr. Dasent, however, in his recently published translation of the *Njal Saga*, translates the name *Olaf Rattle*, assuming the word to be Icelandic.* This chieftain, immediately after his defeat at Tara, fled to Hy or Iona, where he soon after died. The Four Masters (A. D. 977-980) say that he died there "after penance and a good life;" from which it would seem that he had embraced Christianity. Keating makes no mention of his conversion, and asserts that he was driven out of Ireland. But even in that case, if he was free to choose, it is not likely that he would have selected Hy as his place of retreat, had he not been influenced by religion.

His sons, Ragnall and Gluniarn, were the leaders of his army at the battle of Tara, where the former was slain. It is not said who Ragnall's mother was; but we are told that Olaf had married Donflaith, daughter of Muirchertach MacNeill, of the Leather Cloaks, mother of Malachy, by whom he had Gluniarn; he was also subsequently (we may presume) married to Gormflaith, by whom he had Sitric, who was King of the Danes of Dublin at the time of the battle of Clontarf, and had probably succeeded to the throne after the death of Gluniarn, in 989; this Sitric, as we shall see, was afterwards married to Brian's daughter.

The history of this lady Gormflaith, or Gormlaith, called Kormlada in the *Njal Saga*, strikingly illustrates what has been said as to the frequency of matrimonial alliances between the Danish and Irish families. She was an Irish princess, the grand-daughter of Finn, Lord of Offaly, who was slain in 928, and sister of the Maelmordha, or Maelmurry, King of Leinster, who was slain at the battle of Clontarf. She is said in the Icelandic account of Brian's battle to have been "the fairest of all women, and best gifted in everything that was not in her own power; but it was the talk of men that she did all things ill, over which she had any power."† She was successively the wife of Amlaff or Olaf Cuarain, of Malachy, and of Brian. She was probably married to Malachy about 980, after the flight of Olaf; and having been divorced by Malachy, was married by Brian,—if, indeed, her connexion with those chieftains can be said to have been that of legal matrimony. The *Njal Saga* says expressly that she had no issue by Brian; but the "Wars of the Gael with the Gaill" followed by the Four Masters, assert that she was the mother of Donogh, Brian's youngest son. She is also said to have had a son by Malachy, named Conchobhar or Connor. But it is difficult to reconcile with the dates given in the *Annals* the statement that she was the mother of Brian's son Donogh or Dunchadh, unless we suppose him illegitimate, or born before her marriage with Brian. The Four Masters record the death of Dubhchobhlaigh, a wife of Brian, in 1009; therefore Brian could

* The Latin translations of the *Njal Saga* and of the *Saga Olaf's Tryggvasonar*, leave the word untranslated.

† Dasent, "Story of Burnt Njal," ii. 323.

not have been legally married to Gormlaith before that year; and if Donogh was born in Christian wedlock, he could not have been much more than three years old in 1014, at the battle of Clontarf; but he is mentioned by the Four Masters as having been in command of an army in the south of Ireland that very year;* and, after Brian's death, he seems to have lost no time in contesting with his brother Tadhg the succession to the crown. Before the year had expired, the two brothers fought a battle, in which Donogh was defeated.†

The fact, therefore, that there had been matrimonial alliances between the Danish kings of Dublin and Malachy's family is, as I have said, very unfairly urged as a proof of that chieftain's disloyalty. Similar alliances existed also between the same kings of Dublin and the family of Brian. If the Danish King Gluniarn was the son of Malachy's mother, the Danish King Sitric was Brian's son-in-law, and the son of Brian's mistress, or wife; and that mistress, or wife, was the widow of the Danish King Olaf Cuarain, and the mother of Brian's son, Donogh. If it be a reproach to King Malachy that he was half-brother to the Danish chieftain Gluniarn, it is equally a reproach to Donogh, son of Brian, that he was half-brother to the Danish chieftain Sitric.

Not less unfounded is the insinuation that the weakness and incompetency of Malachy's government induced the provincial sovereigns of Ireland to call upon Brian to take upon himself the crown. Nothing can be more contrary to the facts of history. The government of Malachy, both before the revolution which dethroned him, and after he had resumed the sovereignty, upon Brian's death, was remarkable for activity and vigour. Immediately after the battle of Tara, we read that he marched against Dublin: a siege of three days and three nights put him in possession of the town and of its costly spoils. He proclaimed liberty to all the prisoners and hostages that were found in the fortress, amongst whom was Domhnall Claen, King of Leinster; and delivered the north of Ireland from the tribute and taxes, which the Danes, by the possession of those hostages, were enabled to exact.

By this time Brian had been declared King of all Munster, or Leth Mogha, the southern half of Ireland; and Malachy, alarmed at the rapid growth of his power, invaded the territory of the Dal-Cais, the tribe-name of Brian's family, and destroyed the ancient oak-tree under which the chieftains of the Dal-Cais were wont to be inaugurated, and which stood on the fair-green of Magh Adhair, now Moyre, near Tullagh, in the county Clare.

* From the curious poem quoted by the Four Masters at 1030, in which the three "leaps" of Gormlaith, i. e. her three marriages, are spoken of, it seems to follow that she was first married to Olaf, then to Malachy, and last to Brian. This squares very well with the history. But the *Njal's Saga*, at least in Dr. Dasent's translation, says "Brian was the name of the king who first had her to wife," as if she had been the wife of Brian before she was married to Olaf Cuarain. The Latin version, however, does not bear out this translation: it simply says that "there was a king, named Brian, whose wife she was, although at that time put away by him."—*Havina*, 1809, p. 590.

† Four Masters, p. 781.

The next year we find him in alliance with his half-brother Gluniarn, the Danish chieftain of Dublin, who had submitted to his power, and now joined him in an attack upon Domhnall Claen, King of Leinster, who had so recently been liberated by Malachy, but who now rose in insurrection against him, aided by the Danes of Waterford. A battle was fought, in which Malachy was victorious. This was A. D. 982, according to the Four Masters.

Next year Brian invaded Meath, to revenge the insulting destruction of the oak-tree of Magh Adhair; and Malachy soon after retaliated by plundering Connaught, then in alliance with Brian, destroying its islands, killing its chieftains, and reducing Mayo to ashes.*

Some three or four years of predatory warfare followed, during which Brian's resources seem to have been occupied in opposing an inroad of the Connaught chieftains, who had now revolted against him, aided by the Danes of Wexford. A new invasion of Norsemen had also attacked the coast of Dalaradia (county of Down), and plundered the venerable abbey of Hy, or Iona. This and the continued rebellion of the people of Leinster may have given Malachy also sufficient employment. The Dublin Danes were thus enabled to recover their independence. Gluniarn, in 989, was murdered by a drunken slave; and the same year Malachy besieged the Castle of Dublin, which held out for twenty nights. It appears that even at that early period the supply of water in Dublin was defective. The canals did not exist, and the "Vartry scheme" was not yet thought of. There were no quays on the banks of the Liffey, and the tide flowed over the plain now occupied by Irishtown, Merrion-square, College-green, and Dame-street, up to the very walls of the Castle. The Danish defenders of the fortress were reduced to the necessity of drinking this foul and brackish water, and were at length starved into submission.

Brian continued to harass the territories of Malachy by the same kind of rude and predatory warfare, for some years; but was defeated, with all the forces of Munster, at Aenach Tete, now Nenagh, Co. Tipperary, in 994. Immediately afterwards Malachy marched again to suppress an insurrection of the Danes of Dublin, and it was on this occasion that he carried off the "collar of gold," or, more properly, *ring* of gold, which Moore's verse has rendered so celebrated. This ring is called by our annalists "the ring of Tomar,"—Tomar being, in all probability, an ancestor of the Dublin Danes, whose ring they had brought with them, when they set out for Ireland. The holy ring (*baugr*) was essential to every temple of the Pagan Danes. It lay on the altars, and upon it all solemn oaths were taken.† "The sword of Carlus," another Danish national relic, was also taken from them by Malachy on the same occasion. We know nothing of the "sword of Carlus." But if the conjecture of our learned associate, Mr. Haliday, be correct, and he can support it by some ingenious arguments, the Ring of Tomar is now in the

* Four Masters, A. D. 984.

† Dasent's "Story of Burnt Njal," vol. i., p. xxxviii.

Museum of the Academy. It is a large ring of gold, with another smaller ring running upon it, intended apparently for suspension.

About this time, Maolmorda, or Maolmurry, brother of Gormlaith, mother of Sitric, joined the Danes of Dublin, in order to secure their assistance in defence of his pretence to the crown of Leinster against the more legitimate claim of Donnchadh, son of Domhnall Claon. This alliance, together with the success of Malachy's campaigns, appears to have made a change in the politics of the Munster chieftains. For in 997, or 998, "to the great joy of the Irish," as the Four Masters say, we find Brian and Malachy uniting their forces against the Danes of Dublin. The terms of this alliance, as stated in the "Wars of the Gaedhil with the Gaill," were these:—That Malachy should restore all hostages or prisoners who were Brian's subjects or allies; that Brian should be acknowledged as King of all Munster; and that Malachy should be recognized by him as King of Leth Cuinn, or the northern half of Ireland, "without war or trespass from Brian."

Two years after this treaty, the Danes of Dublin, with Maelmordha, who had usurped the sovereignty of Leinster, revolted, after having taken Donnchadh, the legitimate king of Leinster, prisoner. They met the united forces of Malachy and Brian at Glen-mama,* a place near Dunlavan, the fortress of the Kings of Leinster, in the county of Wicklow; and a bloody conflict ensued, in which, after much slaughter on both sides, the Danes were completely defeated. The victorious troops marched without resistance to Dublin. The Castle was taken, and the town plundered. Brian remained encamped in the city, "from great Christmas to little Christmas,"† or, according to another account, from Christmas Day to the Feast of St. Bridget (Feb. 1).‡ During this period Brian was not idle. He plundered a great part of Leinster, cut down woods, and cleared passages through the country, with a view, no doubt, to future military operations.

On the day of the battle of Glen-mama, Murchadh, son of Brian, found the Leinster chieftain Maelmordha, after the defeat of his allies, concealed in the foliage of a yew-tree. He was, of course, taken prisoner. The King of Dublin, who is called, in the wars of the Gaedhil and Gaill, Amlaibh, or Olaf, but more correctly, by the Four Masters, Sitric, son of Amlaibh, or Olaf, fled to the north of Ireland, expecting to receive protection from the northern O'Neills. In this, however, he was disappointed; and before the end of the year he "submitted to Brian's

* This place has not been identified. The name signifies "Valley of the gap," and seems to point to some natural gap or pass in the mountains. Mr. O'Donoghue is wrong (Mem. of the O'Briens, p. 20, note) in supposing the name to mean "Valley of the defeat," and to have been derived from the battle here spoken of. The place was called Glen-mama long before. See Circuit of Muirchertach Mac Neill, pp. 36, 37.

† i. e. from Christmas day to the Epiphany.—"Wars of Gaedhil," &c., p. 113. But the Four Masters seem to understand by *Little Christmas* the octave of Christmas, for they say that Brian remained in Dublin a week only.

‡ "Wars of the Gaedhil and Gaill," p. 117.

own terms," and consented to hold the fortress of Dublin as Brian's vassal. A similar alliance was made with Maelmordha. Brian recognized him as King of Leinster, in opposition to the hereditary claim of Donnchadh, son of Domhnall Claen; and he also became Brian's vassal.

It was probably about this time, or soon after, that Brian formed his matrimonial alliance with Gormlaith, the widow of Olaf, and mother of Sitric, King of Dublin; although, as we have seen, he must have had a less legitimate intimacy with her some time before, if she was the mother of his son Donogh. About this time, also, he probably gave his daughter in marriage to Sitric. At all events, in a few months after the battle of Glen-mama, Brian was in alliance with those who had been his enemies in that deadly conflict, the Dublin Danes, and Maolmordha, the brother of Gormlaith.

And now he was strong enough to set at nought his treaty with Malachy. The very same year he raised a powerful army, gathered from South Connaught and Ossory, in addition to his own Dal-Cassian forces. His new allies, the Danes of Dublin, and the King of Leinster, lent their aid. He entered the territories of Malachy, and proceeded as far as Tara. His Danish cavalry had been sent forward before the rest of the army, but were met by King Malachy in person, and entirely routed. "*Pœne omnes occisi sunt*," say the Annals of Ulster. Tighernach calls this the first "treacherous turning of Brian against Malachy," *impoð tpe mebanl*. But the author of the Wars of the Gaedhil and Gaill makes no mention whatsoever of this transaction.

From this brief summary of the history of the two chieftains, it will be seen with what gross injustice Malachy is accused of incapacity and breach of faith. If this latter accusation belongs to either party, it must assuredly fall upon Brian; by him, and not by Malachy, was the treaty violated, whereby the two princes consented to divide the sovereignty of Ireland,—Malachy recognizing Brian as king of Leth Mogha, and Brian acknowledging Malachy as king of Leth Cuinn.

But now the superior power of Brian and his restless ambition carried the day. Malachy submitted, and in the year 1002, Brian was recognized as King of all Ireland, and Malachy became simply king of Meath, or Tara. The new monarch soon after set out on an expedition, to demand hostages from all the petty princes, especially in the north, who were likely to disturb his government; and having thus secured their submission, and recommended himself to the clergy, by recognizing the jurisdiction of Armagh, and by great liberality to the churches, a period of peace ensued, which was very unusual in Ireland at that time. The Munster historians have doubtless exaggerated greatly both the duration and the amount of this peace. It was then the lady, according to the legend celebrated by Moore,* adorned with gems, and bearing upon her

* See what Moore himself, in his character of historian, has said of this romantic legend.—"Hist. of Ireland," vol. ii., pp. 103-4.

wand a costly ring of gold, walked unmolested from one extremity of Ireland to the other:—

“Lady! dost thou not fear to stray,
So lone and lovely, through this bleak way?
Are Erin’s sons so good, or so cold,
As not to be tempted by woman or gold?”

“Sir Knight, I feel not the least alarm,—
No son of Erin will offer me harm;
For though they love woman and golden store,
Sir Knight, they love honour and virtue more.”

It was then also that Brian is said to have made roads and bridges, erected round towers, built and restored churches, strengthened fortresses, and improved harbours in every part of Ireland; it was then also that he enacted many useful laws, and promoted, in various ways, the arts of civilization and peace.

Amongst other things, we are told* that surnames were instituted by him, which seems apocryphal, although it is perhaps true that in his time the patronymics which have since become surnames began to be assumed by the principal Irish families.†

But notwithstanding these halcyon days of peace, honour, and virtue, the Annals exhibit their usual records of assassinations, outrage, battles, and plunder; nor does chronology allow time sufficient for the golden age of Brian, so celebrated by his eulogists, between his becoming King of Ireland in 1002 and his death in 1014. His circuit of Ireland, made to demand hostages and secure the peaceful submission of the minor chieftains, is dated by the Four Masters 1005, and is not by them represented to have been so completely successful as the romantic histories of his reign would make us believe.

But we must come now to the battle of Clontarf. It was probably two, or perhaps three years, before that event that Maolmordha, King of Leinster, arrived at Cencoradh,‡ or Kincora, where Brian then resided in his hereditary mansion. Gormlaith was there at the time, in the character of Brian’s wife. Maolmordha had brought with him three large pine-trees, fit to make masts for ships, probably constituting his annual tribute, or a part of his tribute, as one of Brian’s vassals. He wore also on the journey a coat or tunic, which Brian had given him, with a border of gold, and silver buttons. This was, perhaps, also a token of vassalage. On the road a dispute having occurred between his men, Maolmordha himself stepped in to save one of the trees from falling. In the effort he made, one of the buttons of his tunic broke. On his arrival at Brian’s palace, he applied to his sister Gormlaith to replace the button. She appears to have just then conceived that hatred of her husband Brian which the Njal Saga attributes to her. She took her brother’s

* Keating.

† See Dr. O’Donovan’s Introduction to the Topographical Poems of O’Dugan and O’Heerin, now in course of publication by the Irish Archaeological and Celtic Society, in which a curious and valuable history of Irish surnames will be found.

‡ The word signifies “The head of the weir.”

tunic and cast it into the fire, reproaching him with meanness of spirit and cowardice for submitting to be the vassal or servant of any one. An accidental circumstance aided her influence, and drove Maelmordha to revolt. Murchadh, or Morrogh, Brian's son, sat down to play a game of chess with his cousin Conaing, son of Donnucuan, Brian's brother. Maelmordha stood by, and suggested a move by which Morrogh lost. Irritated by this, Morrogh said to Maelmordha, "This was like the advice you gave the Danes at Glen-mama, which lost them the battle." "Well," said Maelmordha, in great wrath, "I will soon give them advice again, and then they shall not be defeated." "You had better take care," said the other, "that they have a yew-tree ready for your use."

After this insult the King of Leinster took his departure, deeply offended; and when Brian sent a servant after him with a soothing message, he smashed the servant's head with a stick, and pursued his way. It is probable that Gormlaith accompanied him, or followed him soon after; for we find her next in the court of her son Sitric in Dublin, directing his councils, and organizing the opposition against Brian.

The Sagas throw great light on the motives which led the foreign Norsemen to join the enterprise of Sitric. In 1013, Svein, the Danish invader of England, died, leaving to his son Cnut to continue among the Saxons the Danish dynasty which he had founded. The establishment of a similar dynasty in Ireland was the bait offered by Sitric to the chieftains whose aid he sought. To Sigurd, Earl of Orkney, he promised the sovereignty of Ireland and his mother's hand; this was about Christmas, and it was agreed that Earl Sigurd should come with all his host to Dublin by Palm Sunday.*

On his return to Dublin, Sitric explained to his mother the bargain he had made, and she expressed herself well pleased; but sent him off again to seek two vikings on the west coast of the Isle of Man, directing him to engage their services, whatever price they asked.

These were two brothers, Ospak and Brodir. Ospak was a heathen, but Brodir had been a Christian, and had been ordained a deacon. He had, however, apostatized, and at the time when Sitric met him, "he had thrown off his faith," to use the language of the Saga, as translated by Dr. Dasent, "and had become God's dastard, and now worshipped heathen fiends; and he was, of all men, most skilled in sorcery." He was clad in a coat of mail of magical virtue, "which no steel could bite." He was tall, and had such long black hair, that he tucked his locks under his belt.†

He also stipulated that he should have the hand of Gormlaith, and be King of Ireland; and Sitric made no difficulty in agreeing to these conditions, on the understanding that the arrangement should be kept secret from Earl Sigurd; and so Brodir also agreed to come to Dublin by Palm Sunday.

Ospak, however, was dissatisfied. He had ten ships, and Brodir twenty. He escaped at night by stratagem, notwithstanding the efforts

* Dasent, "Story of Burnt Njal," vol. ii., pp. 327, 328.

† Ibid, p. 328

made by Brodir to detain him. He sailed round Ireland, entered the Shannon, and joined Brian at Kincora. He embraced Christianity, apparently as the necessary consequence of his deserting the cause of the Norsemen; in the words of the Saga, "he took baptism, and gave himself over into the King's hands."*

Whilst these negotiations were going on, or perhaps a little before, the Leinster men, aided by Flaithbertach, or Flaherty O'Neill, son of Muirchertach, and grandson of Muirchertach of the Leather Cloaks, made an inroad upon Malachy, but were repulsed. In revenge, Malachy, on his own resources, attacked the Dublin Danes, and plundered as far as Ben Edair, or Howth. There, however, he was met by the whole force of Maelmordha, King of Leinster, and of the Danes of Dublin. The army of Malachy was cut to pieces; and his son Flann, surnamed the Albanach, or the Scotchman, was amongst the slain.† Malachy then appealed to Brian, and demanded the protection to which, as a vassal, he had an undoubted right. This was in the year 1012 or 1013, and we can scarcely require a more conclusive refutation of the calumny that Malachy was faithless to the cause of Brian on the plains of Clontarf. His whole life had been spent in endeavouring to keep in check the power of the Danes of Dublin and their allies of Leinster. He had lost his crown by the alliance of the Danes of Dublin with Brian, and he had just smarted from a sharp defeat in battle by the Danes of Dublin, in which his eldest son had fallen. Every motive, therefore, was combined to make him both zealous and loyal to the battle in which the power of the Danes of Dublin was finally crushed; and in fact it is evident that, if Malachy kept his forces for a time aloof from the battle, as the narrative of the combat states, he did so from policy. He waited until the impetuous troops of his allies had broken the ranks of the Danes, and then he rushed on with a decisive stroke, in which he enjoyed the luxury of a complete revenge for his recent loss. The Four Masters must have been well aware of the calumny that Malachy had been in league with Sitric and his allies. That calumny is to be found in the "Wars of the Gaedhil with the Gaill," and other authorities which the Four Masters had before them; nevertheless, the Four Masters not only make no mention of that calumny, but expressly tell us that, after the death of Brian and the slaughter of his choicest captains, the forces of the enemy were completely routed "by dint of battling, bravery, and striking," by Maelseachlainn (i. e., Malachy) from the river Tolka to Dublin, "against the Danes and men of Leinster," in which conflict Maelmordha himself was slain, with all the principal chieftains of Leinster. There cannot, therefore, be a doubt, as Mr. O'Donoghue, the latest historian of the battle, has remarked, that the completion of the victory, and its pretensions to be regarded as decisive, were in a great measure, due to the prudence and valour of Malachy.‡

* Dasent, "Story of Burnt Nijal," p. 332. † "Wars of Gaedhil and Gaill," p. 149.

‡ O'Donoghue, "Memoir of the O'Briens," p. 33; and compare also Moore, "History of Ireland," vol. ii., p. 114.

It is unnecessary to go more minutely into the history of the battle; and I shall therefore conclude by noticing briefly the opinion expressed by Dr. Dasent,* that at Clontarf, in Brian's battle, "the old faith and new faith met in the lists, face to face, for their last struggle." Sitric and his mother, Gormlaith, did not scruple to call to their aid the Viking Brodir, the apostate Christian deacon, the heathen sorcerer. Sigurd, Earl of Orkney, caused to be borne "in front of his battle array his famous raven banner, wrought by his mother with mighty spells, which was to bring victory to the host before whom it fluttered, but death to the man by whose hands it was borne."

Brodir had predicted that, if the battle was fought on Good Friday, Brian would be victorious; but that he would be victorious at the expense of his life. On a day so sacred in the Christian calendar, all that the demon gods of Paganism could do was to revenge Brian's victory with his blood; and Brodir was himself the instrument of this vengeance. It is evident, therefore, that the fight, as described in the Saga, was regarded as a conflict between the expiring spells of Paganism and the higher power of the purer faith. "The struggle of the two faiths," as Dr. Dasent well remarks, "is carried on throughout the day, until at last the champions of neither creed can claim a complete victory"—the spells and sooth-sayings of the old faith, now brought into immediate conflict with a new and better creed, "were powerless to win the day, and could only avail to make the battle drawn."

And we find the same thing intimated, not obscurely, in the Irish version of the story. Among Brian's champions, according to the narrative given in the "Wars of the Gael and Gaill," the ancient belief in the Irish fairy mythology still lingered in the minds of some, the sincerity of whose Christianity cannot be doubted. Dunlaing O'Hartigan, and Morrogh, Brian's son, are both represented as retaining some lingering faith in the supernatural power and existence of the Heathen deities. Dunlaing states that he had received from those Pagan Deities offers of "life without death, without cold, without thirst, without hunger, without decay," if he would abandon Brian's cause; whilst, on the other hand, he was assured by them that certain death would be his fate that day, as well as the fate of Morrogh, if he entered the battle. But, nevertheless, he preferred that fate to all the Pagan promises of joy and happiness,—including, strange to say, "delight beyond any delight of the delights of the earth, until the judgment, and heaven after the judgment," because he had pledged his word to Brian's cause, and was resolved never to abandon that cause, even with the certainty of immediate death. Morrogh replies—"Often was I, too, offered in hills and in fairy mansions this world and these gifts: but I never abandoned, for one night, my country nor my inheritance for them."†

So true it is that this battle was regarded by both sides as a conflict in which the expiring spells of Paganism were engaged in their last

* "Story of Burnt Njal," vol. i., p. clxxxix. sq.

† "Wars of Gaedhil and Gaill," pp. 171, 173.

struggle with Christianity. So true, also, is the remark of Dr. Dasent, that "the pure doctrines of Christianity were then merely the possession of a few, while the creed of the common herd was little more than a garbled blending of the most jarring tenets and wildest superstitions of both faiths."*

It is remarkable that Sitric, the Danish king, is represented as having taken no part in the battle, remaining during the day within the walls of Dublin, probably with a strong reserve; and no attempt appears to have been made to assail the fortress, or to dislodge Sitric and his garrison. So far as the field of Clontarf was concerned, therefore, Dr. Dasent is correct in saying that the forces of Paganism were powerless to win the day, and could only avail to make the battle drawn. But the subsequent action, under Malachy, on the banks of the Tolka, rendered the victory complete on the Christian side, by the overthrow and slaughter of the Leinster chieftains, with the remnant of the Danish forces, who had attempted to rally after the battle. Sitric, however, appears to have still maintained possession of the Castle of Dublin; the Danish power in Ireland, weakened as much by want of union as by the prowess of the native chieftains, still continued formidable, until, by frequent intermarriages and the mutual interests of both parties, the Danes became absorbed amongst the native population; and when the Norman invaders established themselves in Ireland, nearly a century and a half after the battle of Clontarf, they found the Irish and the posterity of the Norsemen in close alliance, and ready to unite in resisting the establishment in the country of the new colony. The Cotters or Mac Ottirs, the Mac Ivars, the Mac Dubhgalls, the Mac Lochlinns, the Harolds, the Macauleys, and other descendants of Danish families, had become as Irish as the Irish themselves.

Dr. Petrie made some observations on the foregoing paper; and stated that the late celebrated Daniel O'Connell had always taken the same view of the character of Brian Borumha which Dr. Todd had now advocated.

THE REV. SAMUEL HAUGHTON, F. R. S., Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, read the following paper:—

ON THE TRUE HEIGHT OF THE TIDE AT IRELAND'S EYE ON THE EVENING OF THE 6TH SEPTEMBER, 1852, THE DAY OF THE MURDER OF MRS. KIRWAN.

THE following facts relative to the tide at Ireland's Eye were ascertained by me in December, 1852, in consequence of the reports of Mr. Kirwan's trial, published in the Dublin newspapers, containing statements as to the time and height of the tide on the evening of the 6th September, which carried with them internal evidence of their inaccuracy. For example, it was given in evidence that the hour of high water on the evening of that day was half-past three o'clock, and that the range of

* "Story of Burnt Njal," vol i., p. xcxcviii.